

## *The Catholic Church in China*

The history of relations between the Catholic Church and China is very complex. Christianity first reached China over a thousand years ago, from bishop John of Monte Corvino (1370), Franciscans to Matteo Ricci and his companions, first Jesuit missionaries arrived in China (1582) during this time Chinese Catholics increased.

### **Chinese Rites Controversy (17-18th centuries)**

There was a dispute among Catholic missionaries over the religiosity of Confucianism and Chinese rituals during the 17th and 18th centuries. Whether Chinese ritual practices of honoring family ancestors and other formal Confucian. The Jesuits argued that these Chinese rites were secular rituals that were compatible with Christianity, within certain limits, and should thus be tolerated. The Dominicans and Franciscans, however, disagreed and reported the issue to Rome.

Pope Clement XI banned the rites in 1704. In 1742, Benedict XIV reaffirmed the ban and forbade debate between Jesuits and Dominicans, Franciscans

In 1721, the Kangxi Emperor disagreed with Clément's decree and banned Christian missions in China, Westerners should not be allowed to preach in China for almost two centuries.

On 8<sup>th</sup> December 1939, a. Pius XII claimed the Chinese Catholics can observe the ancestral rites and participate in Confucius-honoring ceremonies. the general principle of sometimes admitting native traditions even into the liturgy of the church.

In 1860, after the Second Opium War, the Jesuits entered China for the second time.

### **New China**

In 1949 the People's Republic of China was proclaimed. Everything changed in 1949 when the Communists came to power.

In January 1951 the Religious Affairs Office was established. the Communist Party expelled all missionaries and severed diplomatic relations with the Vatican. Chinese priests tried to convince the Communist government that the country's Catholic Church could operate independently, but by 1955, Chinese Catholics had become targets as well, and over the course of two weeks that fall, more than 1,200 Catholic priests, nuns, and laypeople were arrested and detained.

### **Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association**

In 1957 the "Catholic Patriotic Association" was founded. Catholicism, like all religions, was permitted to operate only under the supervision of the State Administration for Religious Affairs. All legal worship was to be conducted through state-approved churches belonging to the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association (CCPA), which does not recognize the authority of the Pope and realizing of independence, autonomy and self-administration of the Church in China. Then Church divided into two side, open Church and underground Church.

Chinese Catholic patriotic association is not church, it is a political organization, which control the Church.

### **Chinese culture revolution**

During the Chinese culture revolution (1966—1976) .all religion had been completely banned .The churches were stripped of everything, damaged and used as storerooms, factories or homes,

Bishops, priests and nuns, many laypeople as well were arrested, insulted and condemned to forced labor camps or prison.

### **reform and opening policies**

in 1978 start of Deng Xiaoping's Reforms. religious freedom was being restored. They returned church properties and church were reopened again.

After the end of the Cultural Revolution, many bishops in the new situation asked for recognition from Rome through reserved channels and received it.

**1981:** China's officials remove the requirement for Chinese Catholics to swear independence from Rome and the Holy See, though the pope is only allowed to be viewed by Chinese Catholics as a "spiritual leader" who has no administrative authority over the Chinese Church.

## **The complex relation between China and the Holy See**

A major impediment to the re-establishment of relations between the Vatican and Beijing was the issue of who appoints the bishops. As a matter of maintaining autonomy and rejecting foreign intervention, the official church had no official contact with the Vatican and did not recognize its authority. In later years, however, the CPA allowed for unofficial Vatican approval of ordinations.

### **Letter from pope benedict sixteen in 2007**

On 27<sup>th</sup> May 2007. Pope benedict sixteen wrote the letter to the Catholics in the People's Republic of China, the pope guided the church in china to express **Forgiveness, communion, unity among ourselves** .The pope encourages the "loyal faithful" of the Mainland, "the purification of memory, the pardoning of wrongdoers, the forgetting of injustices suffered and the loving restoration to serenity of troubled hearts, all to be accomplished in the Name of Jesus Crucified and Risen, can require moving beyond personal positions or viewpoints born of painful or difficult experiences"( n. 6).

### **Provisional agreement between china and holy see**

On September 22, 2018, the Holy See and the People's Republic of China signed a two-year "Provisional Agreement between the Holy See and china on the appointment of Bishops", set to expire on October 22, 2020. the Provisional Agreement aimed to create "conditions for great collaboration at the bilateral level." This was the first time that an agreement of cooperation has been jointly signed by the Holy See and China.

The exact terms of the Provisional Agreement have not been publicly released but people who are familiar with the agreement stated that it allowed for the Holy See to review bishop candidates recommended by Chinese Patriotic Catholic Association (CCPA) and the Holy See and China extended another two years for the Provisional Agreement until October 22, 2022.

many bishops who were ordained without papal permission have asked for and received reconciliation with Rome, and now all Chinese bishops are in communion with the universal Catholic Church.

Pope Francis hopes that, with these decisions, a new process may begin that will allow the wounds of the past to be overcome, leading to the full communion of all Chinese Catholics,

Pope Francis recognized that the Provisional Agreement is experimental in nature and will not resolve other conflicts between the Holy See and China, but it will allow for both parties to "act more positively for the orderly and harmonious growth of the Catholic community in China.

Catholics in China rejoiced, despite the ongoing tensions between the "underground" and state-recognized church. With a new agreement between the Vatican and China on the appointment of bishops, the Catholic Church in China has entered a new era.

### **We still face so many challenges today**

#### **Sinicization of religion** **(2016)**

in 2016, Xi jin ping called for the 'sinicization of religion'. the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) must 'guide the adaptation of religions to socialist society'. In its academic sense, 'sinicization of religion' refers to the indigenization of religious faith, practice, and ritual in Chinese culture and society. For Xi, 'sinicization' is profoundly political. It requires religious leaders and institutions demonstrably to embrace State Socialism and the leadership of the CCP.

According to xi's sinicization', a religious policy to enforce three key priorities of the CCP:

- a. to streamline the bureaucracy for efficient oversight and control of all non-Party spheres and institutions;
- b. to revive the sway of Party ideology over all aspects of life in China; and
- c. to remove any 'contradiction' that might challenge Party ideology and rule.

### **In 2017, China bans children from church services**

children under the age of 18 were forbidden to attend church services or enter a church building. even with their parents

The restriction was announced in some provinces where a relatively high percentage of Christians live, for example, in the neighbouring eastern provinces of Fujian, Zhejiang, Jiangsu and Henan. However local authorities in some provinces do generally turn a blind eye to this restriction, in order to avoid unnecessary conflicts with churches.

### **Registration with the government**

From 2019 Priests in China are required to register with the government in order to be able to minister openly. This registration – which is obligatory, according to the new regulations on religious activities,

In the process of doing they must declare acceptance, among other things, of the principle of independence, autonomy and self-administration of the Church in China.

### **Pastoral guidelines from pope francis for this register matter**

On 28<sup>th</sup> June 2019 , provides "pastoral guidelines of the Holy See concerning the civil registration of clergy in China. the document says, "the text of the declaration required for the registration does not appear respectful of the Catholic faith," priests should specify - in writing if possible, or else in front of witnesses – that the declaration is made only to the extent it is "faithful to the principles of Catholic doctrine."

The Vatican also said it “understands and respects the choice of those who, in conscience, decide that they are unable to register under the current conditions.”

In a meantime. the Vatican “continues to dialogue with the Chinese authorities” to find “a formula that, while allowing for registration, would respect not only Chinese laws but also Catholic doctrine.”

### **Measures for the Administration of Internet Religious Information Service” (March 2022)**

new regulations on religious practice online

The new Measures make it illegal to post any religious material online without obtaining an Internet Religious Information Services Licence from the provincial religious affairs department.

The Measures apply to all online activity, including websites, apps, social media, blogs, messaging and webcasts – and even unauthorised forwarding or linking to religious content is prohibited.

It is impossible to assess exactly how many Catholics there are in China, since there remains a very large number of unregistered “underground” faithful; According to the Holy Spirit Study Center in Hong Kong,

Today, Chinese Catholics remain about 12 million for both open and underground church · less than 1 percent of China's population.

We still have so many challenges for church in china . challenge may also afford opportunities